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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON JERICO PRISON RAID

Editorial Commentary

-- "The Jericho option"

Daily columnist Jawad Bashiti writes on the op-ed page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (03/16): "Israel in the era of Sharon and Olmert decided to close the door of negotiations once and for all. Its strategic interests dictated that it unilaterally resolve all its problems that stem from its long struggle with the Palestinians. All the Palestinians must now wipe away from their brains the illusion that the solution they wanted and that enjoys international legitimacy is still possible through political negotiations. After all, they are being invited by Israel and the international community and even the Arabs, not to fulfill the conditions for restarting the negotiations, but to fulfill the conditions whose only result would be to put a stop to the resistance themselves.. Fatah and Hamas and the rest of the Palestinian factions can then agree on rebuilding the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in all aspects and as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. After that, the PLO can dissolve the Palestinian Authority, cancel all agreements that were signed with Israel, and backtrack from its recognition of Israel's right to live in security and peace, because this recognition is meaningless and worthless if it is not accompanied by Israel's recognition of the Palestinian people and their internationally acknowledged national rights. The two recognitions either live together or die together. Do the Palestinians have anything to lose if they do that? No, all they have to lose are their illusions. Let Israel have its unilateral ways and let the Palestinians have theirs."

-- "Thuggery and thievery"

Chief Editor Taher Odwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (03/16): "The government of Israel is a government of thugs, brutes and thieves. Ehud Olmert wants to prove to voters that he is the good student of Sharon. If the unconscious former prime minister destroyed the country in Ramallah and poisoned Arafat and, as a result, won the love and support of the Israelis, then would he not do the same thing. That is why he sent his forces to destroy the government complex in Jericho and arrest Ahmed Saadat. It is an evident Machiavellian electioneering game, where the end justifies the means, and the end here is campaign to win the imminent elections, but it is a game devoid of morality and political characteristics.. Moreover, the Olmert government is a government of thieves. While his troops were raiding the Jericho prison, he was in Ariel settlement celebrating linking the settlement with Israel and declaring the settlement of part of Israel. This is a clear lie, because the settlement is part of the occupied Palestinian territories and its land belongs to the Palestinians. This is another form of a state founded on thievery and stealing other peoples' lands and claiming them as part of Israel eternal land. Highway robbers and thieves. The Palestinians and the Arabs, along with the world public opinion, tried ever since the Madrid conference to believe that the rulers of Israel want peace, that they are not after other people's land, that Israel is country that respects the laws and the agreements, and that they want only to leave side by side with the Arabs in the region! For 15 years, everyone tried to believe that the rulers of Israel want peace and that they are tired of the struggle, but all they got in return for the good intentions and the extended hands was more aggression, killing and land usurpation.. From the Jericho prison through the Ariel settlement to the separation wall, there was a fact that slapped the face of every Arab and Palestinian.. The fact is that the occupation still

stands on every inch of Palestine, and that all that is being said and done on the basis of the presence of peace is but an illusion, and the first illusion is to believe that there is a Palestinian Authority and a Hamas government and a legislative council! I tell Hamas and Fateh: put away your papers and go resist and restore your lands and your right in the same manner and in that same legitimate manner which all peoples had used in the face of occupiers."

-- "Thwarting the settlement and embarrassing the Authority and the Arabs"

Daily columnist Rakan Majali writes on the back-page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/16): "When Israel raids one of the Authority's prisons, one must wonder about any authority that is left for the Palestinian Authority, particularly when the arrest of Saadat in Jericho prison was done in accordance with an agreement guaranteed by Britain and America. The incident was nothing more than a terrorist operation in the context of the war of extermination and destruction being waged against the Palestinian people. It has become clear that Israel meant to thwart the settlement process once and for all.. The strange thing is that America and Britain declared their implicit and explicit approval of this provocative and terrorist crime. This declaration is not astonishing because it falls in the heart of the pre-emptive war and the hostile military campaign that started with the occupation of Iraq, and it is part of the political and economic pressures and striking Arab communities from within in the name exporting democracy and human rights, for which the Jericho prison raid provides the practical model of the American and western understanding of human rights! Clearly, America is dealing with the region in the same language of force and it is encouraging Israel to use that same language and to use organized terrorism.. Israel did not mean to embarrass the Palestinian National Authority only, but also the Arab regimes, especially those that have made peace with Israel. It has aborted any Arab wager on reaching a just and comprehensive solution and on achieving stability and security in the region."

-- "Carte Blanche to spurn law"

Centrist, influential among the elite English daily Jordan Times (03/16) editorializes: "Israel has been harassing the Palestinian Authority for years to arrest and prosecute people engaged in armed resistance against the illegal Israeli occupation. It is astonishing gall that when the PA does arrest people and keep them incarcerated, Israel takes the first best chance, violently and at the cost of three lives, to break in and remove these people to Israeli jails. It was, in addition, an enormous blow to the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas who has been trying to convince Palestinians in general, and the incoming Hamas-led government in particular, that a negotiated process with Israel is the only way forward.. Those incarcerated are accused of assassinating an Israeli political leader. Notwithstanding the extremely unpalatable nature of the leader in question, assassinations of political leaders are unacceptable. But Israel has never held back from murdering Palestinian political leaders. That it does not hold itself up to the standards it holds Palestinians to is not surprising. That the international community does not is inexcusable. The role of the international community, particularly Britain and the United States, must be called into question here.. Why does Washington insist on protecting Israel? Has it not dawned on policy makers in the United States that protecting Israel willy-nilly is tantamount to giving Israel carte blanche to ignore, reject and belittle international law, as it has done for nearly four decades by maintaining its illegal, belligerent military occupation at the cost of thousands of lives? And does it not occur to Washington that for as long as Israel feels safe that big brother is watching out for it, no amount of verbal warnings or admonitions will have any effect?"

HALE